

Committee	Dated:
Epping Forest Consultative	10 10 2018
Subject: Wanstead Park: - Briefing note for Members (SEF 38/18)	Public
Report of: Director of Open Spaces & Heritage	For Discussion
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Summary

The City of London holds in trust some 70% of Wanstead Park Grade II* Registered Park and Garden. In 2009, Historic England placed the entire Park on the national Heritage at Risk Register. Working with the three co-owners of the registered Park and Garden, a parkland plan is being developed by consultants with the ambition to revive the Park, identifying the works necessary to secure the removal of the park from the 'Heritage At Risk' register.

This report provides an update on the progress of the Parkland Plan and introduces the implications for the Plan of the notification by the Environment Agency in December 2017 of a statutory revised High Risk category for the three Large Raised Reservoirs with rectification costs currently estimated at £10 million. It is recommended that a Project Board be established to support the preparation of a combined LRR and Parkland Plan (Gateway 1/2) project proposal be submitted to the Project Sub Committee for December 2018.

Recommendation(s)

Consultative Committee Members are asked to support:

- the preparation of a combined LRR and Parkland Plan (Gateway 1/2) project proposal be submitted to the Project Sub Committee for December 2018.

Main Report

Background

1. Wanstead Park is East London's oldest public park and considered to be London's greatest surviving designed waterscape. At its most extensive (circa 1800) there were nine artificial lakes within the Park. Five lakes remain today and form a cascade with the lower four lakes administered by the City of London.

Following a spectacular decline in the 1820s, followed by 60 years of neglect, a substantial proportion of the Park and Out Park were added to Epping Forest by the City of London between 1876 and 1880. Other parts of the Park were later purchased by the London Borough of Redbridge and the Wanstead Sports Ground Limited.

2. Three of the four City of London managed lakes each of which impound over 25,000 cubic metres of water are classed as category B Large Raised Reservoirs (LRRS) under the Reservoirs Act 1975, which obliges the City of London to retain its registration of the LRRs; safely manage the dams and to ensure that the dams are regularly inspected by suitably qualified engineers.
3. The Park is listed as a Grade II* – ‘a garden of special interest’ - Registered Park and Garden by English Heritage (now Historic England) in 2001, following an earlier Grade II designation in 1987.
4. The Park was declared at risk by English Heritage in 2009 due to concerns that the designed landscape was in poor condition, divided under separate ownership and management, and was at risk of further decline.
5. A Wanstead Park Steering Group (WPSG) was established in 2013 to explore the potential for removing the RPG from the ‘at risk’ register. Under the auspices of the WPSG the consultancy LDA Design was engaged in November 2014 to undertake a review of the knowledge and evidence base on Wanstead Park and to provide direction for future planning in the Park.

Current Position

Parkland Plan

6. Following public consultation LDA produced a draft Wanstead Park Conceptual Options plan in April 2015 which has undergone a number of reviews by the WPSG.
7. The current plan proposes three different themed work packages. Two of the packages are framed to meet the objective of getting Wanstead Park off the ‘at risk’ register. These projects would require substantial capital funding and have been framed to sit within a funding scheme along the lines of the former Lottery Parks for People programme. A third package has been developed which seeks to achieve key improvements but does so largely working within existing resource levels.
8. A final draft Parkland plan is currently being reviewed by the WPSG with a number of important additional considerations identified through the consultation phase:

Lake system: Shift of emphasis towards a ‘sustainable’ lake system and not simply a like for like replacement. To include: An assessment on the potential role for wetland habitats such as reed beds to reduce the need for water; increased emphasis on the enhancement of the lake system for biodiversity

and improving the resilience of the lake system to cope with problems such as Blue Green Algae and invasive weeds.

Parking: The establishment of Controlled Parking Zones (CPZ) in the vicinity of the Park has meant that we need to consider more parking requirements for day to day visitors and also to support event parking.

Large Raised Reservoirs (LRR)

9. Under the requirements of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 the Environment Agency (EA) undertook in 2014 a risk-based review of the LRRs and confirmed in December 2017 that they have upgraded the Risk Category of the Large Raised Reservoir lakes at Wanstead Park to High Risk - reservoirs where an uncontrolled release of water could put people's lives at risk.
10. In response to the EA's revised risk category the independent civil engineer who monitors the management of the reservoirs in line with the Flood and Water Management Act, has advised that an engineering assessment of the dams needs to be undertaken in the first instance.
11. The engineering assessment will identify the need for works to the dams in response to the revised risk category. It is anticipated that there is likely to be significant modifications to the current dams required, with cost estimates of up to £10 million.

Water Resources

12. The City of London has an abstraction licence until 2023 from the Environment Agency to pump up to 294,000 cubic metres of water from the chalk aquifer underlying London. There will be a requirement under the next abstraction licence in 2023 to review the resilience of the aquifer supply.

Flood Risk

13. The City of London is a significant riparian landowner in relation to the River Roding. To better manage the flood risk in the Roding catchment at South Woodford and Wanstead, the Environment Agency is proposing the construction of a £7.5 million Flood Storage Scheme (FSS) on farmland at Ongar. The cost of the scheme is expected to be part funded by Riparian Owners including the City of London.

Next steps

14. With the Parkland Plan nearing completion approval to progress the development of any project proposals at Wanstead Park needs to be sought via the City of London's project management Gateway approval process. Coincident with this will be the need to progress the LRR program through the Gateway Process and given its statutory nature financing these works will take priority.

15. There are synergies between the LRR and likely Parkland plan works where particular activities should, with planning, meet multiple outcomes. It is proposed that a provisional Project Board be established to coordinate the progress of these two initiatives into the City of London's 'Gateway' project approval process. The intention would be that a Gateway 1 (Corporate Projects Board) and Gateway 2 (Projects Sub-Committee) report proposing an integrated LRR and Parkland Improvement Project be submitted for December 2018. Further progress will be determined by subsequent gateway approval processes.

Implications

Corporate & Strategic Implications

16. Open Spaces Department Business Plan: The LDA Project Plan exercise and background research follow from three of the Open Spaces Department's Strategic aims of: providing high quality accessible open spaces, involving communities in site management and adopting sustainable working practices.
17. Corporate Plan 2013-17: The LDA Project Plan exercise and background research meets the objective of the Corporate Plan to provide valued services to London and the nation.
18. Statement of Community Involvement: The City of London has consulted on the preparation of the original Conservation Statement for Wanstead Park (2011) and in 2015 consulted on the LDA Project Plan.

Financial Implications;

19. Improvement works on the dams following the engineering assessment will be a statutory requirement for the City of London to complete and will not be able to be funded from external grants.
20. Heritage works under the Parkland Plan have been developed to fit in with the HLF grant scheme for projects of up to £5 million and will need to be developed to a RIBA Stage 2 standard.
21. Grant support mechanisms to help fund the delivery of the Parkland Plan are likely to have a matched funding requirement. The matched funding proportion varies across projects, however benching marking with similar projects suggests that for Lottery funding there would be a requirement of 30% match funding contribution from the City of London, local fundraising and project partners.
22. A financing plan is still to be developed and will form part of the Gateway application process however it is anticipated that a bid would comprise a mix of internal City of London and external funding elements:

City of London funding options: Epping Forest Local Risk budget, Epping Forest Fund, Combined Work Programme funding and Capital funding bid;

External funding options: Lottery Fund Schemes, Thames Water – Potential Corporate Social Responsibility award, Local Authority Funding e.g. Community Infrastructure Levy, Local Fundraising and Volunteer Time:

Legal Implications

23. The Epping Forest Act 1880 includes an additional power at section 5 to '*manage ornamental inclosed grounds*' which most probably reflect the City's purchase of Wanstead Park in 1880.
24. Apart from general Occupiers Liability Acts responsibilities, there is no specific heritage duty on owners of registered parks and gardens to take steps to have them removed from the 'at risk' register.
25. Under the Flood and Water Management act (2010) three of the five Park lakes have been designated 'High Risk'.

Conclusion

26. A revised risk category for the LRRs at Wanstead Park to 'High risk' means that a significant reservoir improvement project is likely to be required
27. A substantial amount of work has been undertaken to research and understand the landscape conservation and regeneration needs at Wanstead Park since it was added to the Heritage at Risk Register in 2009.
28. The Parkland Plan draws together this extensive body of research and has undertaken stakeholder feedback to prepare a Parkland Plan to achieve the removal of Wanstead Park from the 'at risk' register and to identify how best we can access external funding programmes.
29. A Project Board will be established to scope the statutory and heritage works with the long-term intention to secure project synergies together with the necessary funding for the project.

Appendices

- None

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